

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 21, 2002

The Honorable Ernest F. Hollings  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
State and Judiciary  
Committee on Appropriations  
S-206 Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Judd Gregg  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
State and Judiciary  
Committee on Appropriations  
S-125 Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Hollings and Ranking Member Gregg:

We are writing to request that you provide the fully authorized \$14.5 million for the Small Business Administration's Women's Business Center Program (WBC) in FY 2003.

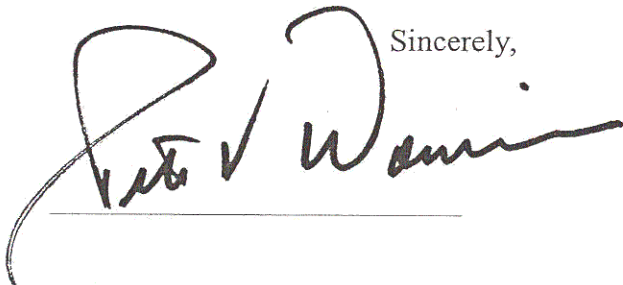
The Women's Business Center Program, founded in 1988, is the only Small Business Administration program that specifically targets the needs of women-led businesses. Through the Women's Business Centers Sustainability Act of 1999, the program was authorized to grow from a smaller pilot to a full-fledged network of assistance to women business owners across the country, and we are committed to seeing the intent of this legislation fulfilled. Aspiring women business owners, from childcare providers to construction workers to biotech PhDs, are a unique and growing market that women's business centers are especially equipped to serve. The 93 SBA-funded Women's Business Centers across the country helped approximately 61,000 women last year start and grow businesses from Maine to Los Angeles, and from Dallas to North Dakota. Preliminary findings based on a study of four women's business centers across the country by the Center for Women's Business Research have shown that Women's Business Centers provide ongoing, effective support for their clients, with the average client visiting her center 18 times over the course of a two-year period. 59% of clients are in business after one year, and the majority of clients are working full time in their businesses. Funding of \$14.5 million for the Women's Business Centers in FY 2003 would sustain and improve upon this valuable network.

Through their Boards of Directors, instructors, volunteers, and private sector partners, Women's Business Centers provide women with business planning assistance, access to capital, networks, role models, and, often, services such as childcare and transportation that allow low- and moderate-income women with children access the program. According to statistics provided by the Economic Census and by the Center for Women's Business Research, women continue to start businesses at over twice the national rate, are more likely than their male counterparts to seek professional assistance, and are more likely than their male counterparts to have a wide variety of experiences that lead them to a business start (rather than traditional routes of

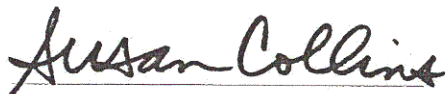
inheritance, executive position within another business, or MBA). While they represent 28% of all owners of privately held companies in the U.S., women-led businesses currently receive only 2% of federal procurement dollars, 6% of venture capital, and garner approximately 10% of sales revenues. There has been tremendous growth in women-led businesses, and yet there is much potential yet to be realized.

Without the fully authorized funding level of \$14.5 Million for the Women's Business Program, some existing centers will lose crucial federal support for their programs. Demand for services at women's business centers is very high in the current economic climate, making it more crucial than ever to sustain and even increase funding for this program. We hope that you will join with us to support full funding for the Women's Business Center Program, promoting a strong entrepreneurial economy as well as women's prosperity and economic self-sufficiency. It is clearly an investment that will yield high returns for our economy and our society.


Sincerely,

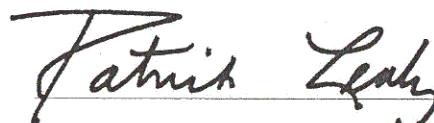
 Peter J. Warming

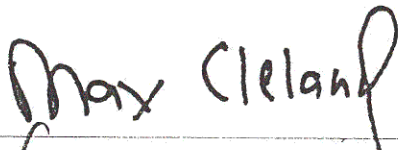
 J. Culver

 Susan Collins

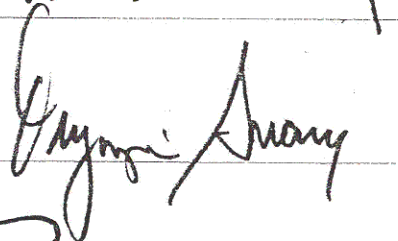
 Debbie Stabenow

 Paul Sarbanes

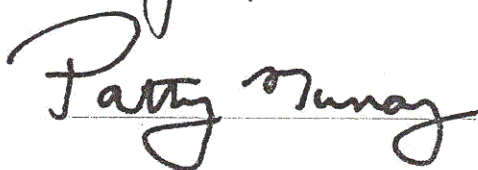
 Patrick Leahy

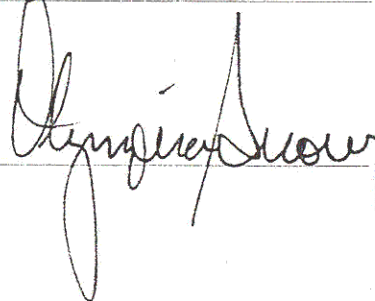
 Max Cleland

 Mark L. Warner

 Olympia Snowe

 Chris Dodd

 Patty Murray

 Olympia Snowe

Jeff Bond

Jean Carnado

Thoz. Tordella

Ron Wyden

Chuck Grassley

John F. Kerry

Bob G.

Jim Tuck